Destination Reputation: Responding to Societal Issues

APPENDIX - Detailed Findings from Meeting and Event Planners

Future Partners

DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL

In order to gain a deeper understanding and clarity into destination reputation and how this can impact meetings consideration and selection, the research included an exercise using specific destinations as a framework.

Meeting planners were presented with 10 diverse types of meetings destinations—i.e. major urban, college, resort, mid-tier, boutique, suburban, sports, gaming, coastal, etc.—and asked to evaluate these destinations' overall reputations, whether they have been significantly impacted by current societal issues and if the meeting planners' recall any recent advertising for those destinations.

In the reporting the destination names have been anonymized using the naming conventions presented on the following two pages which serve as a reference legend for results shown on pages 6-12.

Destination Legend

Destination 1
- **Type:** Large border-based destination with a convention focus
- **Profile:** A globally connected business and cultural hub with established infrastructure and a proven track record in hosting international meetings and events. The destination offers broad cultural representation, high accessibility, and positive international brand.
- **Perceived Destination Reputation | Perceived Societal Issues:** Planning processes may be impacted by political complexity and longer lead times, while transportation infrastructure requires continued investment to support high-capacity inbound arrivals.

Destination 2
- **Type:** Major West Coast destination with high visitor volume
- **Profile:** Destination with a strong innovation economy and layered industry base. Offers well-known facilities and a developed metropolitan presence supported by an established tourism infrastructure.
- **Perceived Destination Reputation | Perceived Societal Issues:** Ongoing crime and safety concerns, visible homelessness, and frequent media attention related to drug activity contribute to ongoing public discourse around urban conditions.

Destination 3
- **Type:** Medium-sized destination in the Southeast
- **Profile:** Regional center that combines cultural character with practical accessibility. Well-suited for gatherings that seek a smaller footprint and local engagement.
- **Perceived Destination Reputation | Perceived Societal Issues:** Public conversations around local crime, safety, and politics are active, with varying perspectives on regional development and social policy.

Destination 4
- **Type:** Mid-sized university city in the Midwest
- **Profile:** Civic environment shaped by academic, athletic, and cultural institutions. The destination maintains steady demand for group activities across sectors.
- **Perceived Destination Reputation | Perceived Societal Issues:** Social issues and political activism are frequently part of the local environment, occasionally accompanied by heightened media visibility.

Destination 5
- **Type:** Large destination in the Pacific Northwest
- **Profile:** Destination known for its sustainability values, local-first ethos, and creative economy and urban setting centered on progressive identity and innovation.
- **Perceived Destination Reputation | Perceived Societal Issues:** The city experiences continued challenges related to homelessness, public safety, and social justice debates, often highlighted in national media coverage.

Destination Legend (continued)

Destination 6
- **Type:** Large event-ready destination in the Midwest
- **Profile:** A centrally located destination with a strong record of hosting large-scale events and conventions. Its infrastructure and operational efficiency support high-capacity movement and coordination.
- **Perceived Destination Reputation | Perceived Societal Issues:** Localized safety concerns and public conversation around state and municipal political dynamics occasionally shape broader perceptions of the destination. Opportunity for continued growth with airlift investments

Destination 7
- **Type:** Medium-sized coastal destination with legacy infrastructure
- **Profile:** Long standing tourism destination leveraging its role in the meetings and events space. Continued investment supports its growth trajectory.
- **Perceived Destination Reputation | Perceived Societal Issues:** Crime rates and drug-related activity remain prevalent in select areas, with negative media narratives often tied to long-term economic challenges.

Destination 8
- **Type:** Large island-based destination
- **Profile:** Vibrant and bilingual destination offering a blend of heritage and hospitality. Strategic improvements in infrastructure and accessibility support its expanding role in group travel.
- **Perceived Destination Reputation | Perceived Societal Issues:** Recurring severe weather and ongoing infrastructure recovery shape resilience planning, while governance complexities and political discourse contribute to operational uncertainty.

Destination 9
- **Type:** Small destination on the West Coast
- **Profile:** A developing destination with a growing commitment to tourism and community revitalization. Positioned for regional gatherings and economic diversification.
- **Perceived Destination Reputation | Perceived Societal Issues:** Public perception continues to evolve due to ongoing efforts to address localized crime, drug activity, and the legacy of past prominent national news coverage.

Destination 10
- **Type:** Large urban Midwestern destination with convention capacity
- **Profile:** A historic industrial center undergoing significant reinvestment in culture, infrastructure, and innovation. Known for its authenticity and momentum in urban redevelopment.
- **Perceived Destination Reputation | Perceived Societal Issues:** Crime and safety conditions vary by district, with past negative media coverage and active social discourse contributing to ongoing image challenges.

Ad recall has a considerable effect on positive perceptions.

In fact, some of the destinations that are relatively most challenged by perception issues (Destinations 10, 9, 8, and 7) had markedly higher ratings for positive reputation among planners who recall seeing destination ads for these places in the past 12 months (see bold blue call outs in the table below) compared to the total aggregate results (far left column).

Additionally, among the planners who recalled no destination ads (far right column in table below) they rated each destination significantly lower for positive reputation, although the rank order largely follows that of the total aggregate results, except for Destination 5 who receives higher marks among the ad-unaware meeting planner segment.

Columns Represent the Segment of Planners who Recalled Seeing Meetings Related Ads for each Respective Destination and Rate the Destination's Reputation Positively

% of All Planners who consider each to have a Positive or Very Positive Reputation		Destination 7	Destination 10	Destination 6	Destination 3	Destination 4	Destination5	Destination 8	Destination 2	Destination 9	Destination 1	None of the above
*Destination 1	67.0%	68.2%	68.4%	72.0%	68.0%	69.7%	77.5%	70.5%	70.4%	64.4%	**74.2% ↑**	58.6%
Destination 2	64.3%	66.4%	72.4%	67.3%	57.3%	63.6%	69.7%	74.4%	**67.1%**	62.2%	62.9%	55.7%
Destination 3	62.8%	65.5%	65.3%	67.3%	**72.8% ↑**	64.6%	67.4%	65.4%	61.8%	67.8%	67.0%	48.6%
Destination 4	62.8%	66.4%	66.3%	69.2%	70.9%	**72.7%**	71.9%	73.1%	67.8%	75.6%	61.9%	45.7%
Destination 5	59.3%	65.5%	62.2%	58.9%	61.2%	58.6%	**66.3%**	71.8%	65.8%	65.6%	57.7%	57.1%
Destination 6	58.0%	60.0%	64.3%	**63.6%**	60.2%	63.6%	67.4%	62.8%	61.2%	66.7%	60.8%	47.1%
Destination 7	57.0%	**64.5% ↑**	62.2%	60.7%	55.3%	57.6%	61.8%	74.4%	59.2%	62.2%	66.0%	45.7%
Destination 8	53.8%	56.4%	57.1%	60.7%	58.3%	57.6%	68.5%	**74.4% ↑**	53.3%	56.7%	62.9%	45.7%
Destination 9	51.0%	55.5%	58.2%	63.6%	57.3%	56.6%	65.2%	61.5%	58.6%	**60.0% ↑**	54.6%	37.1%
Destination 10	46.5%	56.4%	**64.3% ↑**	61.7% ↑	56.3%	64.6% ↑	67.4% ↑	60.3%	52.0%	62.2%	52.6%	21.4%

*Important Note: Reference Legend on pages 7 & 8 for destination types tested.

Questions: 1. Think of the places below as destinations for the types of meetings you most typically plan. How would you rate the overall reputation of each meeting destination? 2. In the LAST TWELVE (12) MONTHS, which of these destinations have you seen a MEETINGS RELATED advertisement for? (Select all that apply) Base: 400 Meeting Planners

Now think about destinations that have overcome negative perceptions and increased in popularity as a place for meetings. What destinations come to mind?

"[Destination 7]. It's been a long time since I've been there, and it was a run-down place but now I'm seeing more of their advertising which makes me feel they are investing in improving the city again."

Professional Meeting Planner

Two-thirds of meeting planners vote the overall reputation of Destination 1, as the most positive amongst 10 diverse meetings destinations tested.
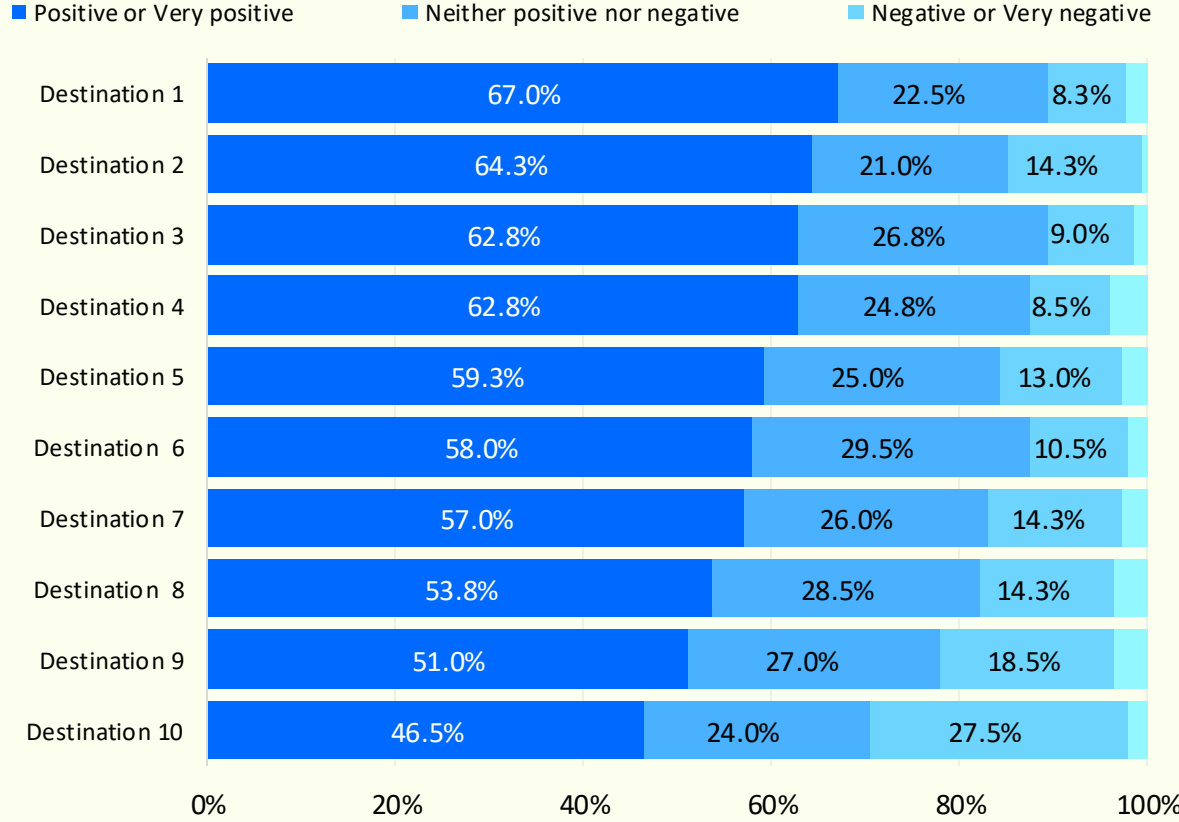
Asked to rate 10 meeting destinations' reputations, meeting planners place Destination 1 (**reference page 51 for definition**) at the top of all competitors (67% positive/very positive).

Destinations 2, 3, and 4 form a second tier, with a positive perception from more than three-in-five meeting planners (ranging from 63% to 64%).

Destination 10 is the only meeting destination that falls below half of planners (47%) rating its overall reputation as positive.

*Important Note: Reference Legend on pages 7 & 8 for destination types tested.

*Perceptions of Meeting Destination Reputations

Legend:
- ■ Positive or Very positive
- ■ Neither positive nor negative
- ■ Negative or Very negative

Destination	Positive or Very positive	Neither positive nor negative	Negative or Very negative
Destination 1	67.0%	22.5%	8.3%
Destination 2	64.3%	21.0%	14.3%
Destination 3	62.8%	26.8%	9.0%
Destination 4	62.8%	24.8%	8.5%
Destination 5	59.3%	25.0%	13.0%
Destination 6	58.0%	29.5%	10.5%
Destination 7	57.0%	26.0%	14.3%
Destination 8	53.8%	28.5%	14.3%
Destination 9	51.0%	27.0%	18.5%
Destination 10	46.5%	24.0%	27.5%

Question: Think of the places below as destinations for the types of meetings you most typically plan. How would you rate the overall reputation of each meeting destination? Base: 400 Meeting Planners

From meeting planners' perspectives, Destinations 2 and 10 are the most significantly impacted by negative press/social issues of the ten destinations—largely driven by homelessness and politics.

Of the 10 tested destinations, meeting planners most commonly perceive Destination 2 and Destination 10 as significantly impacted by negative issues. These two cities usually vie for the unenviable top spot on four negative topics and are always in the top three:
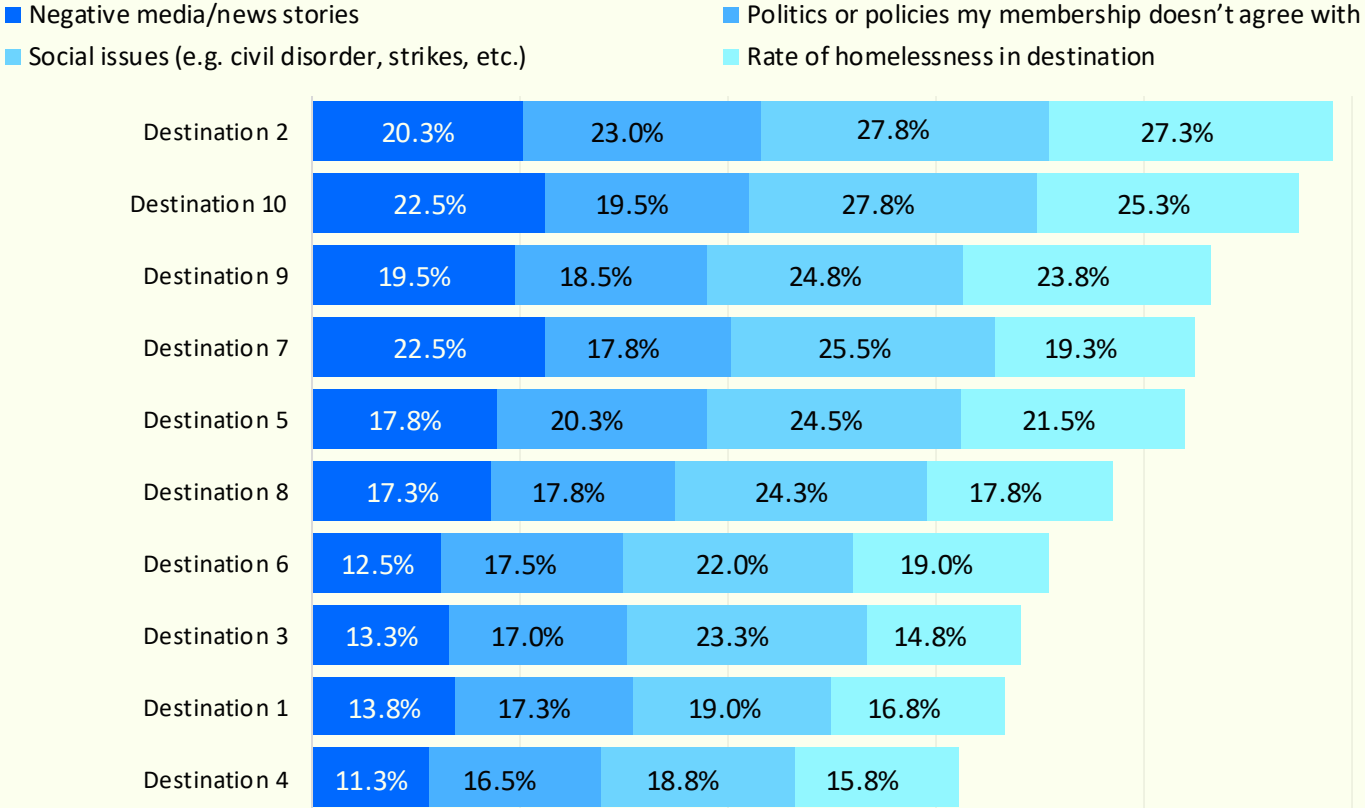
Negative media/news stories: This is the only topic where Destination 2 is not one of the top two (it ranks third at 20%), exceeded by Destination 7 and Destination 10 (both at 22.5%).

Politics/policies not agreed by membership: Destination 2 (23%) is the most criticized, followed by Destination 5 (20%) and Destination 10 (19.5%).

Social issues: Destinations 2 and 10 (both at 28%) lead in significant impact; Destination 7 places third (25.5%).

Homelessness: Destinations 2 (27%) and 10 (25%) top this list as well. Destination 9 ranks third (24%).

*Meetings Destinations Significantly Impacted by Issues

■ Negative media/news stories
■ Social issues (e.g. civil disorder, strikes, etc.)
■ Politics or policies my membership doesn't agree with
■ Rate of homelessness in destination

Destination	Negative media/news stories	Politics or policies	Social issues	Rate of homelessness
Destination 2	20.3%	23.0%	27.8%	27.3%
Destination 10	22.5%	19.5%	27.8%	25.3%
Destination 9	19.5%	18.5%	24.8%	23.8%
Destination 7	22.5%	17.8%	25.5%	19.3%
Destination 5	17.8%	20.3%	24.5%	21.5%
Destination 8	17.3%	17.8%	24.3%	17.8%
Destination 6	12.5%	17.5%	22.0%	19.0%
Destination 3	13.3%	17.0%	23.3%	14.8%
Destination 1	13.8%	17.3%	19.0%	16.8%
Destination 4	11.3%	16.5%	18.8%	15.8%

Question: Consider the destinations below. Select which cities, if any, are significantly impacted by the scenarios presented. Select all that apply for each destination. Base: 400 Meeting Planners
*Important Note: Reference Legend on pages 7 & 8 for destination types tested.

Moving to more specific topics, Destination 2 fades from the spotlight, while Destination 10 remains the primary target for meeting planner concerns—largely due to perceptions of gun violence and violent crime.

Of the ten competitive cities, meeting planners perceive Destination 10 as most significantly impacted by these four specific negative issues. Except for weather, Destination 10 dominates in each of these topics:
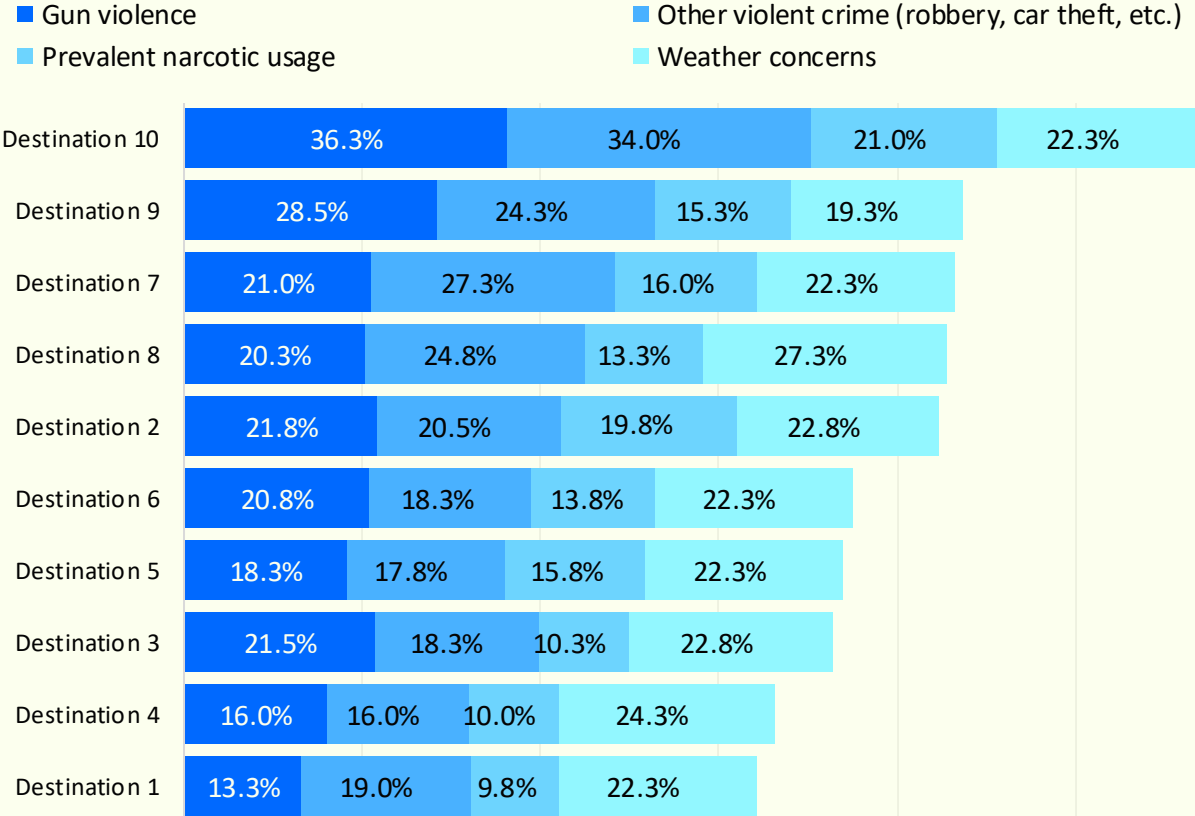
Gun violence: Meeting planners place Destination 10, by a wide margin, as the meeting destination most impacted by gun violence (36%). Destination 9 (28.5%) ranks second, Destination 2 third (22%).

Other violent crime: Destination 10 remains at the top for other violent crime as well (34%), followed by Destinations 7 (27%) and 8 (25%).

Prevalent narcotic usage: Destination 10 still exceeds other destinations (21%), but the gap narrows. Destination 2 ranks second (20%) followed by Destination 7 (16%).

Weather: More planners worry about Destination 8 for weather (27%) than other destinations. Destination 4 ranks second (24%) followed by Destinations 2 and 3 (23% each).

*Meetings Destinations Significantly Impacted by Issues (continued)

■ Gun violence
■ Prevalent narcotic usage
■ Other violent crime (robbery, car theft, etc.)
■ Weather concerns

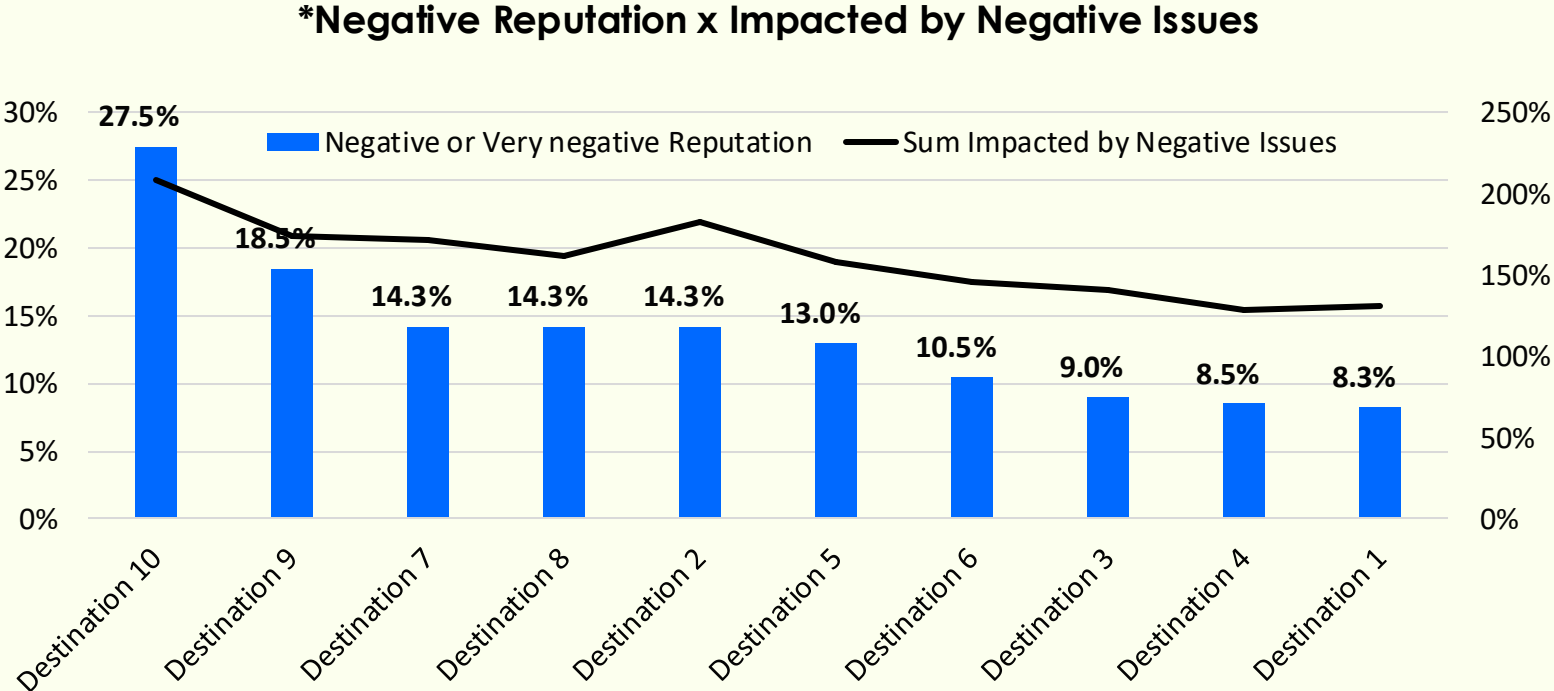| Destination	Gun violence	Other violent crime	Prevalent narcotic usage	Weather concerns
Destination 10	36.3%	34.0%	21.0%	22.3%
Destination 9	28.5%	24.3%	15.3%	19.3%
Destination 7	21.0%	27.3%	16.0%	22.3%
Destination 8	20.3%	24.8%	13.3%	27.3%
Destination 2	21.8%	20.5%	19.8%	22.8%
Destination 6	20.8%	18.3%	13.8%	22.3%
Destination 5	18.3%	17.8%	15.8%	22.3%
Destination 3	21.5%	18.3%	10.3%	22.8%
Destination 4	16.0%	16.0%	10.0%	24.3%
Destination 1	13.3%	19.0%	9.8%	22.3%

Question: Consider the destinations below. Select which cities, if any, are significantly impacted by the scenarios presented. Select all that apply for each destination. Base: 400 Meeting Planners

*Important Note: Reference Legend on pages 7 & 8 for destination types tested.

The more a destination is perceived to suffer from various reputational issues, the greater it reflects on their overall reputation as a place for meetings.

This chart maps the percent of planners who consider each destination to have a negative reputation as a place for meetings (blue bar) against the percent sum of each reputational issue (e.g., negative media, politics, social issues, gun violence, other violent crime, sever weather concerns, homelessness, and prevalent narcotic usage) planners felt plagued each destination tested (black line).

The two statistics largely follow the same trend, where destinations perceived to be impacted by a wider variety of issues results in higher ratings for having a negative reputation. The only exception is Destination 2.

*Negative Reputation x Impacted by Negative Issues

Legend: ■ Negative or Very negative Reputation — Sum Impacted by Negative Issues

Destination	Negative or Very negative Reputation
Destination 10	27.5%
Destination 9	18.5%
Destination 7	14.3%
Destination 8	14.3%
Destination 2	14.3%
Destination 5	13.0%
Destination 6	10.5%
Destination 3	9.0%
Destination 4	8.5%
Destination 1	8.3%

Questions: 1. Think of the places below as destinations for the types of meetings you most typically plan. How would you rate the overall reputation of each meeting destination? 2. Consider the destinations below. Select which cities, if any, are significantly impacted by the scenarios presented. Select all that apply for each destination. Base: 400 Meeting Planners
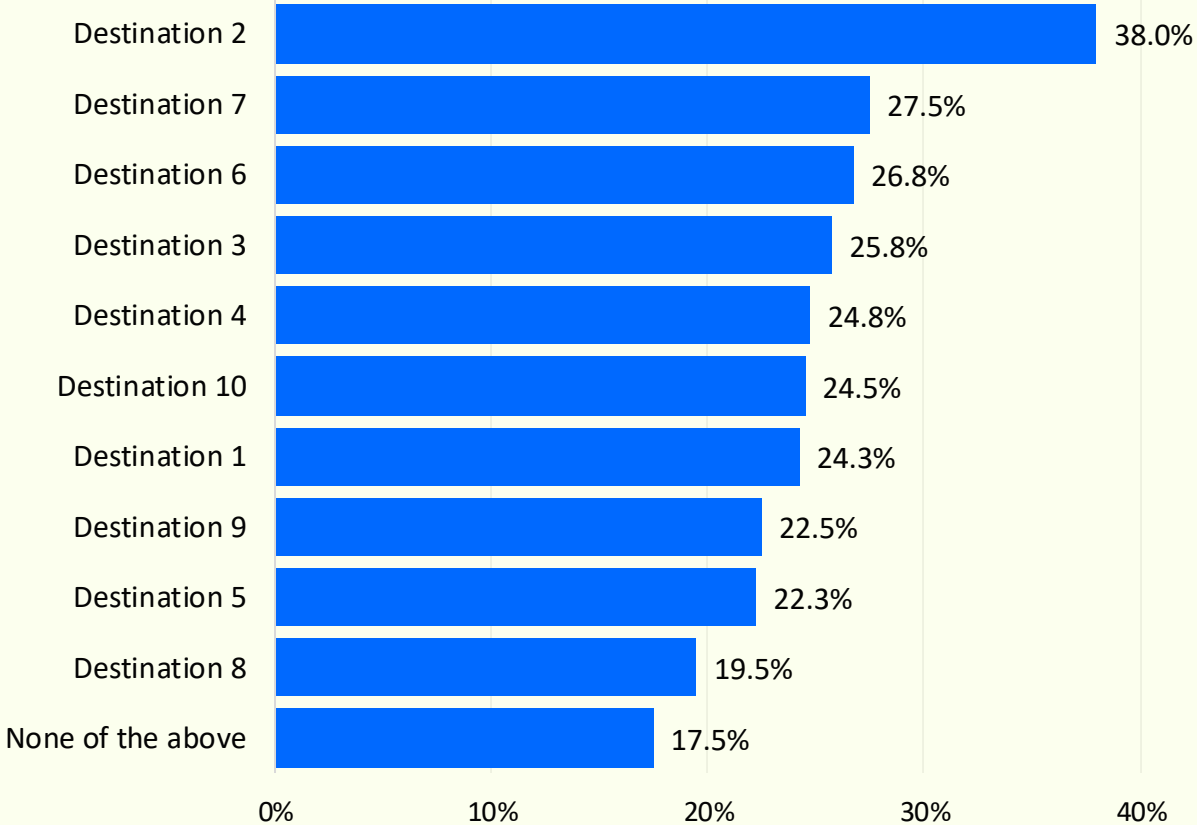***Important Note: Reference Legend on pages 7 & 8 for destination types tested.**

Destination 2 solidly leads other competitors in memorable meetings-related advertising, recalled by more than a third (38%) of meeting planners.

Meeting planners most commonly recall meetings-related advertising by Destination 2 (38%), leading Destination 7 (the next most-cited destination) by over 10-percentage points.

Interestingly, while Destination 2 was considered a top destination for battling negative media, social issues, homelessness, and politics, it was still ranked second (behind Destination 1) for having a positive reputation as a place for meetings. Destination 2 was ranked middle for the more serious offences of gun and other violent crime (behind Destinations 10, 9, 7, and 8). These rankings paired with the fact that their meetings related ads were recalled at a much higher rate than other destinations tested suggests their campaign penetration may have had a substantial positive effect on planner perceptions of the city.

***Meetings-Related Advertisement Recall
in the Past 12 Months by Destination**

Destination	Recall
Destination 2	38.0%
Destination 7	27.5%
Destination 6	26.8%
Destination 3	25.8%
Destination 4	24.8%
Destination 10	24.5%
Destination 1	24.3%
Destination 9	22.5%
Destination 5	22.3%
Destination 8	19.5%
None of the above	17.5%

Question: In the LAST TWELVE (12) MONTHS, which of these destinations have you seen a MEETINGS RELATED advertisement for? (Select all that apply) Base: 400 Meeting Planners
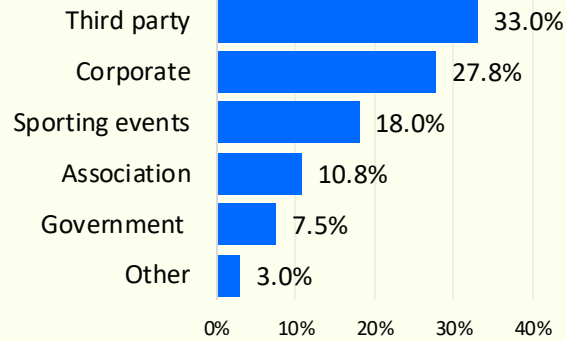***Important Note: Reference Legend on pages 7 & 8 for destination types tested.**

Meeting Planner Respondent Profile

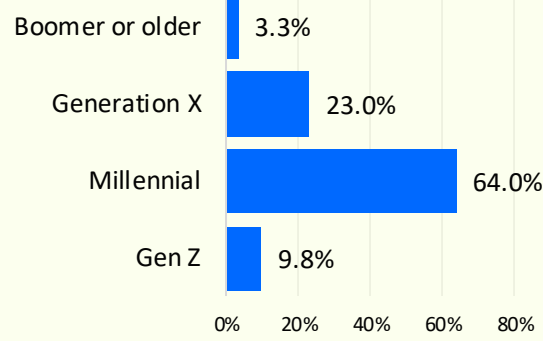# Meeting Planner Survey Respondent Profile

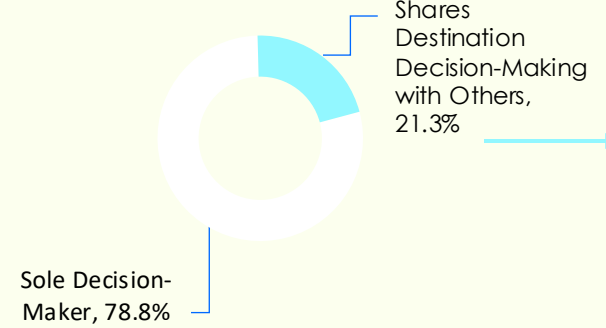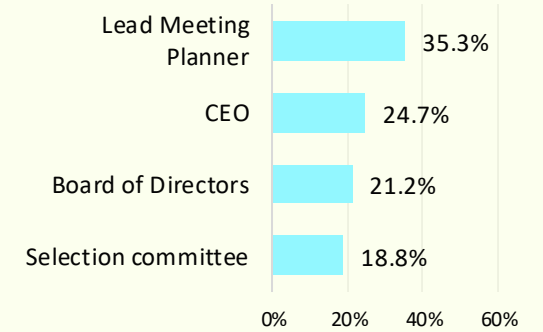*Below are key statistics about the respondents who completed the survey:*

Meeting Planner Type

- Third party — 33.0%
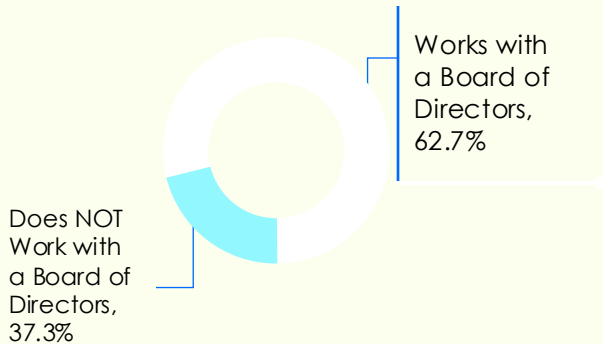- Corporate — 27.8%
- Sporting events — 18.0%
- Association — 10.8%
- Government — 7.5%
- Other — 3.0%

Meeting Planner Generation

- Boomer or older — 3.3%
- Generation X — 23.0%
- Millennial — 64.0%
- Gen Z — 9.8%

Role in Selecting Meetings Destination

- Shares Destination Decision-Making with Others, 21.3%
- Sole Decision-Maker, 78.8%

Meetings Destination Final Decision-Maker

- Lead Meeting Planner — 35.3%
- CEO — 24.7%
- Board of Directors — 21.2%
- Selection committee — 18.8%

Planners Sharing Destination Decision: Works with a BOD

- Works with a Board of Directors, 62.7%
- Does NOT Work with a Board of Directors, 37.3%

BOD's Role in Destination Decision

- The meeting planners propose a list of destinations for the board to approve/reject — 65.0%
- The board has the final decision-making authority on who/where to source — 46.7%
- The board generally adheres to the meeting planner's final recommendation — 46.7%
- The board provides the meeting planner team with a list of destinations to evaluate — 43.3%
- The board has the power to veto a meeting destination choice — 28.3%
- I often have to sell destinations to the board to get their approval — 11.7%

I have successfully sold a destination to a board/final decision-maker who originally did not want to host our meeting there
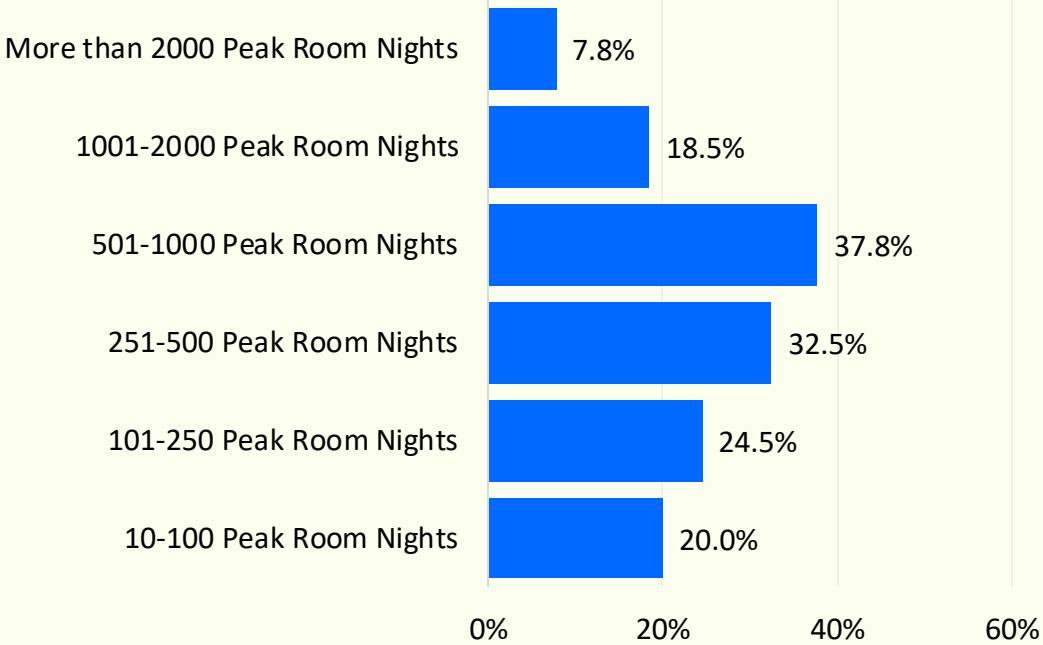
- True, 58.3%
- False, 35.5%
- Not applicable, 6.3%
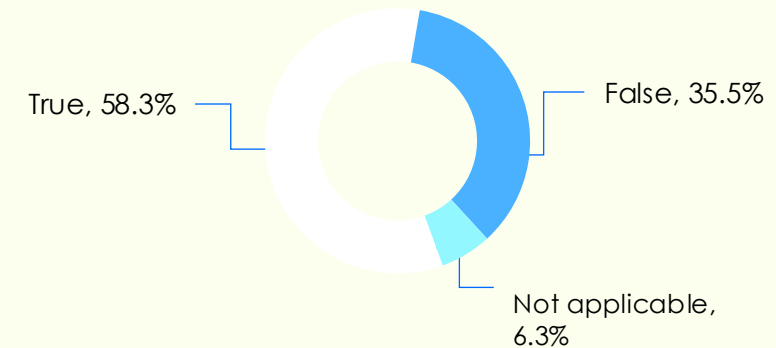
Base: 67 Meeting Planners who share the destination decision-making.

Base: 400 Meeting Planner Surveys.
Note respondents who said they had no say in the destination decision were terminated from the survey.

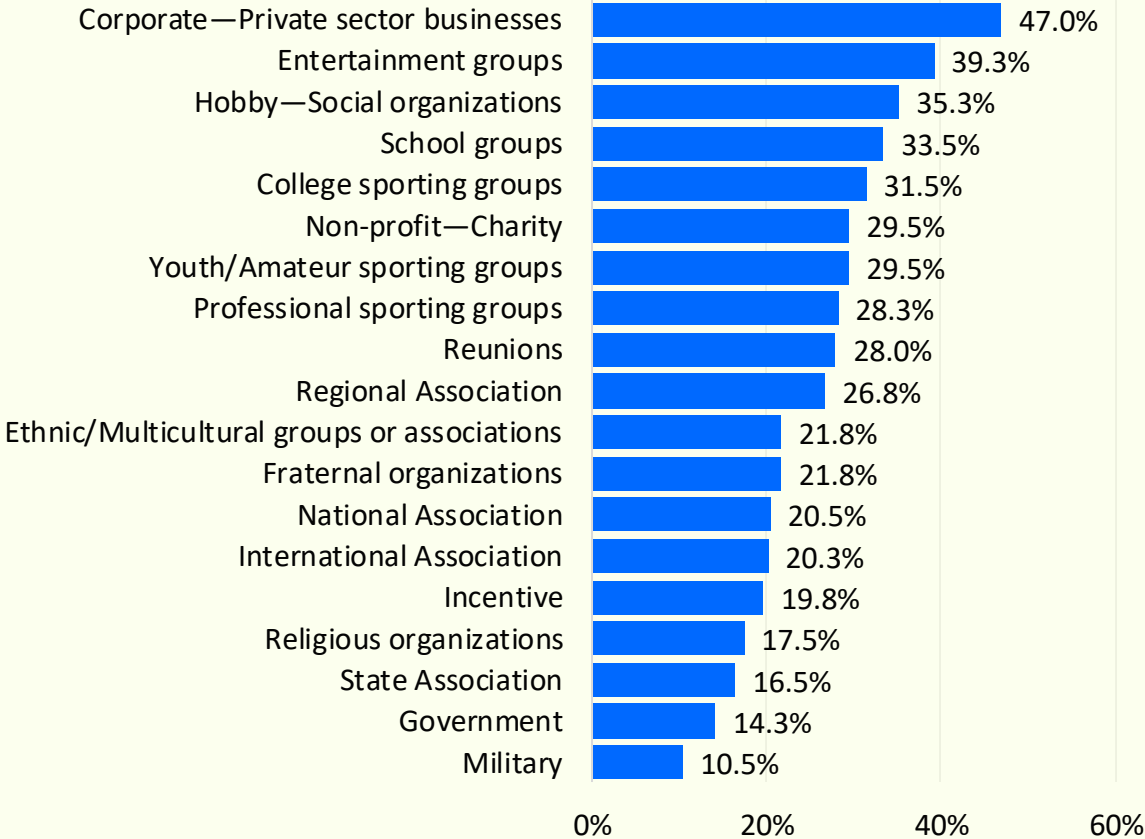# Meeting Planner Survey Respondent Profile

Below are key statistics about the typical groups respondents plan for:

Size of Meetings in Peak Room Nights

Category	Percentage
More than 2000 Peak Room Nights	7.8%
1001-2000 Peak Room Nights	18.5%
501-1000 Peak Room Nights	37.8%
251-500 Peak Room Nights	32.5%
101-250 Peak Room Nights	24.5%
10-100 Peak Room Nights	20.0%

Group Types for Meeting Planning

Group Type	Percentage
Corporate—Private sector businesses	47.0%
Entertainment groups	39.3%
Hobby—Social organizations	35.3%
School groups	33.5%
College sporting groups	31.5%
Non-profit—Charity	29.5%
Youth/Amateur sporting groups	29.5%
Professional sporting groups	28.3%
Reunions	28.0%
Regional Association	26.8%
Ethnic/Multicultural groups or associations	21.8%
Fraternal organizations	21.8%
National Association	20.5%
International Association	20.3%
Incentive	19.8%
Religious organizations	17.5%
State Association	16.5%
Government	14.3%
Military	10.5%

Question: How large are the meetings you typically plan (in peak room nights)?
(Select all that apply) Base: 400 Meeting Planners

Question: Which types of these groups do you most typically plan meetings for?
Base: 400 Meeting Planners

ABOUT DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL

Destinations International is the world's largest and most respected resource for destination organizations, convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) and tourism boards. With more than 8,000 members and partners from over 750 destinations, the association represents a powerful forward-thinking and collaborative community around the world. For more information, click HERE.

ABOUT THE DESTINATIONS INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

The Destinations International Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering destination organizations globally by providing education, research, advocacy and leadership development. The Foundation is classified as a charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code and all donations are tax-deductible. For more information, click HERE.